

Dear Commissioners:

Stop hidden phone fees so I can truly compare prices of phone services. I support the petition filed by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates and endorsed by other consumer advocacy organizations. CG Docket No. 04-208, Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Truth-In-Billing and Billing Format, is long overdue.

Phone bills should be truthful and easy to understand. When signing up for long distance programs, the "billing charge" is often not mentioned in the great rate of xx cents per minute. Add that monthly charge to the mix, and your minute charge can as much as triple! Also, unless I call the company and specifically block access to my account, ANYONE can call up and change my long distance carrier! I know this because it happened to me, and it was a devil of a time getting it straightened out. Likewise, cell phone companies advertise free nationwide long distance, until you view the map of their coverage area, which is anything but nationwide. A coverage area in NY and one in CA doesn't make you a nationwide long distance network! What we are buying should be honestly disclosed, billed transparently, honored completely and untampered with by anyone else but the subscriber.

Because this practice is tolerated by the FCC, long distance and wireless phone companies are able to hide the true cost of service. These add-ons make the advertised price of service significantly less than the amount of the check I have to write each month to pay the bill. Competition will not work if consumers cannot accurately compare prices when shopping for service.

Many states are stepping up to address this problem. They should be allowed to proceed. However, the FCC shouldn't shirk its responsibility, nor limit states from doing more.

The FCC should immediately grant the NASUCA petition to investigate billing practices, and prohibit phone and wireless companies from imposing separate monthly fees, line items or surcharges unless expressly mandated by law or the charge is expressly authorized by a governmental authority.